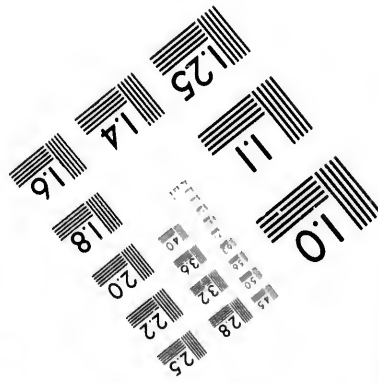
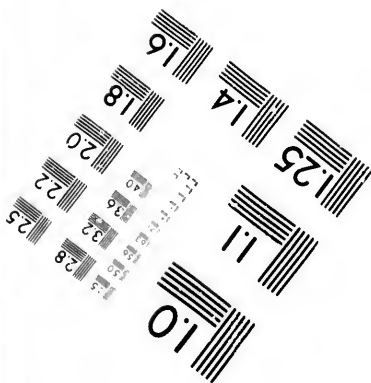
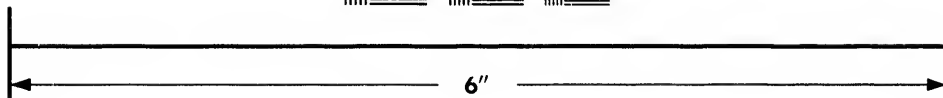
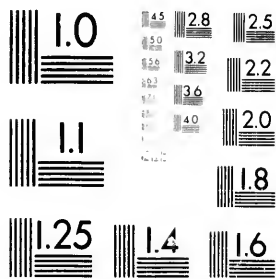


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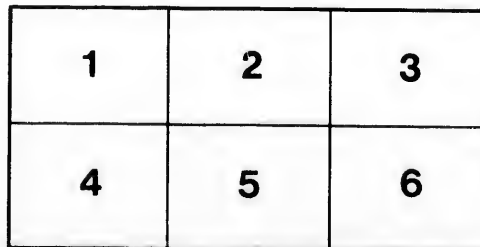
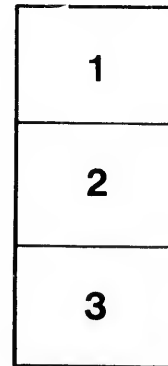
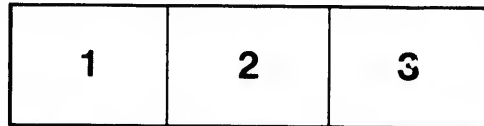
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The
Discovery of North America
by John Cabot

THE ALLEGED DATE AND LANDFALL

ALSO

THE SHIP'S NAME, THE "MATTHEW," A FORGERY OF
CHATTERTON?

BY

HENRY HARRISSE

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

LONDON: 4, TRAFALGAR SQUARE

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THE DISCOVERY OF NORTH AMERICA BY JOHN CABOT.¹

EXTENSIVE preparations are being made at Bristol, England, in Canada, and in Newfoundland to commemorate, on the twenty-fourth of this present month, the landing of John Cabot on the coast of the North-American continent. The intention is praiseworthy; but it is well to recollect that we do not know exactly when and where he first sighted the New World. Nor do we possess means of ascertaining these two points, admittedly of paramount importance in a celebration of that character.

I.

THE alleged date of the landfall rests exclusively upon a statement brought forward, for the first

¹ The greatest part of the present paper first appeared in the June, 1897, number of "The Forum."

time, forty-seven years after the event, and which, thus far, stands uncorroborated. It is contained in a pamphlet in Spanish, written about 1544 by one Dr. Grajales, of the Puerto de Santa Maria,¹ concerning whom we do not know anything else. It was printed out of Spain, and was intended to accompany a map by Sebastian Cabot, apparently engraved in the Netherlands. The type which served for printing the pamphlet was also used to print two series of legends pasted on the right and left of the only copy of that map known, which is now in the National Library at Paris.

Translated, the passage relating to the date reads as follows :

“No. 8. This land was discovered by John Cabot, a Venetian, and Sebastian Cabot, his son, in the year of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ fourteen hundred and ninety-four, on the twenty-fourth of June in the morning, to which

¹ “Tratado de la Carta de nauegar hecho por el Doctor Grajales en el Puerto de Sancta Maria” :—“An exposition (or treatise) of the Sailing chart, made (or composed) by Dr. Grajales in Puerto de Sancta Maria” ; in “Declaratio Chartæ nauigatoriæ Dōmini Almirantis,” MS. in the King’s Library at Madrid. The reader will notice that the title explicitly states that the treatise is the work of Dr. Grajales.

they gave the name '*prima tierra vista*;' and a large island adjacent to it they named 'Sant Juan,' it having been discovered on the day of that saint."¹

The numeral corresponds to that given in the inscription, "De la tierra de los bacallaos ve á tabla primera, No. 3" ("Concerning the country of codfish, see the first table No. 3" [Error for 8]). This inscription is engraved in the map over the region now known as Canada, and embraces the country extending from New Brunswick to Labrador inclusive.

The year 1494 is clearly an anachronism, as the voyage was not undertaken until 1497, by virtue of letters patent granted on March 5, 1496. As to the month, this also is doubtful, for the following reasons: When John Cabot returned to England, he gave an account of his voyage, which is briefly reported in a letter written from London August 23, 1497, by Lorenzo Pasqualigo to his brothers in Venice, and by two despatches sent by Raimondo di

¹ The meaning of the Latin text is somewhat different, viz.: "No. 8. This land was discovered by John Cabot, a Venetian, and Sebastian Cabot, his son, in the year of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, 1494, on the 24th of *July*, at the hour of five at daybreak."

Soncino to the Duke of Milan, August 24 and December 18, 1497.

Pasqualigo states that John Cabot "coasted three hundred leagues ¹ [of the newly discovered country]." This statement is corroborated by Soncino, who "saw the description of the country discovered by Cabot marked in a chart and on a solid globe which the latter had made."² These three hundred leagues would have amounted to six hundred, as Cabot had to retrace his course when sailing homeward. Now John Cabot was already in London on August 10, 1497, which implies that he had reached Bristol about five days earlier. If we accept the alleged date of June 24 as that of his landfall in America, it leaves only forty-two days between his arrival within sight of the New World and his return to England.³

¹ "Andato per la costa lige 300." There must be, however, a mistake in the statement. We should probably read "miles" instead of "leagues." This diminution of two thirds may palliate, but does not remove the difficulty, as it yet leaves a traject to and fro of 300 miles to account for in that short space of time.

² "Eso messer Zoane ha la descriptione del mondo in una carta, et anche in una sphaera solida che lui ha fatto et dimostra dove è capitato."

³ If we were to adopt the Latin text (*July* instead of

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We must assume that Cabot and his small crew of eighteen men, after a voyage said to have lasted more than fifty-two days (they had left England early in May, 1497), rested awhile, and devoted some time to refitting or repairing their diminutive craft ("uno piccolo naviglio e xviii persone se pose a la fortuna"), as well as to taking in wood and water, and renewing the stock of victuals, which could be done only by hunting and salting game on shore. To these necessary delays must be added the time spent in skirting to and fro along three hundred leagues (or miles) of coast. Nor should it be forgotten that, in ranging an unknown and dangerous shore, only a moderate rate of speed could have been maintained. How could all this have been accomplished in the limited time which the alleged landfall on June 24 leaves to Cabot before his return to England? If we suppose that, owing to westerly winds and the Gulf Stream, he effected the homeward voyage in one third less time than is stated to have been required for the outward passage, that is thirty-four days instead of fifty-two, then, as Cabot was already back in Bristol on August 5, *June*), it would leave only thirteen days. This date, however, is clearly an oversight.

he must have taken the necessary rest in the new land, made the indispensable repairs, effected landings, and renewed his stock of provisions, besides coasting six hundred leagues (or miles), all within eight days!

The date June 24, therefore, is highly improbable. It may have originated in connection with an imaginary island which figures in old Portuguese charts, close to the north-east coast, in about 50° lat. In some maps, Wolfenbüttel B, for instance, the cartographer has placed it within the Gulf of St. Lawrence. That island was probably supposed by Sebastian Cabot, in 1544, to be identical with the one—also imaginary, as I propose to show—which he then borrowed from a French map, where it is inserted in the same place. Dr. Grajales, who knew of the almost constant practice in those days of naming islands after the saints on whose days they were discovered, may well have assumed the date of June 24—that of the festival of St. John the Baptist—on seeing that the island was labelled in those maps, "I. de San Juan."

II.

As regards the landfall, the first cartographical mention of the transatlantic discoveries of the English is to be found in the planisphere executed between June and August, 1500, by Juan de la Cosa, the owner and master of Columbus's flagship during his first voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. In that celebrated chart, there is in the proximity and to the west of Cuba an unbroken coast-line, delineated like a continent, and extending northward to the extremity of the map. On the northern portion of that seaboard La Cosa has placed a continuous line of British flags. The most southern inscription in that part of the coast in the chart is, "Mar descubierta por ingleses" ("Sea discovered by the English"). The northernmost reads, "Cabo de ynglaterra" ("The Cape of England").

On July 25, 1498, Pedro de Ayala wrote from London to Ferdinand and Isabella that he possessed the chart or mappamundi which Cabot had brought with him, and that he would send it to their Majesties.¹ It is fair therefore

¹ "Vuestras Altezas ya tendran aviso de todo lo y

to infer that La Cosa's delineations embody the results of Cabot's voyage. Unfortunately, owing to the absence of degrees of latitude and longitude, as well as to the style of the projection, the various positions cannot be determined; for the cartographical data are totally inadequate to enable anyone to locate the landfall. It is even impossible to ascertain whether the *Mar descubierta por ingleses* or the *Cabo de ynglaterra* was first seen, and to what locality either of them corresponds. The two most competent scholars who ever studied the question—Humboldt and Kohl—came to different conclusions. For the former, the *Cabo de ynglaterra* is a cape near Belle Isle; for the latter, it is Cape Race.

Further, John Cabot made a second voyage to the New World, sailing from Bristol in April, 1498, from which voyage he, or his companions, must have returned before 1500. There is consequently no reason why La Cosa's map may not also include geographical information brought back by the second expedition. This is all the more likely, as the extent of the east coast covered with English flags is greater in his map than the distance, also in the latter, between the

asymismo al carta o mapa mundi que este ha fecho, yo no la enbio agora, que aqui la ay."

eastern extremity of Porto Rico and the western-most coast of Cuba, that is, at least, nineteen degrees, or three hundred and eighty marine leagues. How are we to distinguish between these data?

III.

IT is not until a quarter of a century after La Cosa had made his planisphere that we find a Spanish map exhibiting the north-eastern region of North America, named then either "Baccalaos" ("The codfish country"), or "Tierra del Labrador" ("The land of the Laborer"), or both, and set forth as being the *locus* of the discoveries made by the English. The Sevillian cartographers however seem to have drawn a distinction, by ascribing the *Baccalaos* to Corte Real, or the Portuguese, and the *Tierra del Labrador* to the British navigators, or the Cabots.

The services of Sebastian Cabot were engaged, in 1512, by Ferdinand of Aragon chiefly on account of his supposed knowledge of the geography of North America; he having appropriated to himself the merit of the discovery of the American continent made by his father. He

filled in Spain the office of Pilot-Major from February, 1518, until October, 1547, remaining titular of the post during his absence at La Plata. Not only was Sebastian Cabot, by virtue of his functions, supervisor of the chair of cosmography, but he was also a member of the commission of pilots and geographers required by King Ferdinand to make a general revision of all maps. It is evident, therefore, that the charts made in Spain, particularly by the cosmographers to his Majesty, must have represented North America according to Sebastian Cabot's notions, and doubtless borrowed from him the legends inscribed thereon. Let us see now where the discoveries of the English were invariably located in such maps.

We still possess five specimens of Sevillian cartography, which, considering the royal ordinances of the time, and the fact that three maps are stated explicitly to be the work of Charles the Fifth's cartographers, we assume to be derived directly from the *Padron General* or standard official map.

The first and roughest of all is the map sent from Seville in 1527 by an English merchant, Robert Thorne, to Dr. Lee, the ambassador of Henry VIII. in Spain. In it, the northern ex-

tremity of the east coast bears the inscription, "*Nova terra laboratorum dicta*," and on its seaboard we read, "*Terra hec ab Anglis primum fuit inventa*." The region thus said to have been discovered by the English extends from 50° to 65° N. lat. We then have two very elaborate manuscript planispheres, known as the "Weimar" maps. One is anonymous and dated 1527. The other, bearing date 1529, is signed by Diego Ribeiro, who was his Majesty's cosmographer and master chart-maker, as well as Sebastian Cabot's colleague in the Badajoz Junta. The first of these mentions only the *Tierra del laborador*, which is placed between 56° and 60° N. lat. This region, however, is meant for the field of English discoveries in 1497, and probably 1498, as is shown by the Weimar Ribeiro map of 1529, made on the same scale and after the same pattern, and where the inscription is followed by the additional remark, "*Esta tierra descubrieron los Ingleses*" ("This land was discovered by the English"). And what shows still more clearly the identity of these English discoveries with those accomplished by John Cabot and his companions, is the legend added in the same place by Ribeiro in the Propaganda duplicate of his great map: "*Tierra del Labrador*,

laqual descubrieron los Ingleses de la villa de Bristol" ("The Land of the Laborer, which was discovered by the English of the town of Bristol"). Finally, we have the map called "Wolfenbüttel B," anonymous and undated, but certainly constructed in Seville before 1531. This also bears the inscription across Labrador, between 56° and 60° N. lat. "*Descubierta por los Yngleses de la vila de Bristol.*"

The chain of evidence is complete; and it shows that in Seville, during the first forty years of the sixteenth century, cosmographers always located the transatlantic discoveries of the English, implying those of John Cabot, at least ten degrees north of Cape Breton,—according to the scale of latitude inscribed on the Weimar maps. This fact requires to be kept in mind; for that location is due, directly or indirectly, to Sebastian Cabot, in consequence of the official positions which he filled in Spain for so many years.

IV.

IN 1544, the engraved mappamundi of Sebastian Cabot, already mentioned, appeared in Antwerp or in Augsburg. There do we see for the first

time a different *locus* ascribed to the transatlantic discoveries of the English under the flag of Henry VII.

This map gives a geographical representation of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and its vicinity entirely unlike that which had figured previously in Spanish charts, particularly in those which were constructed by the state cosmographers of Spain at the time when Sebastian Cabot was at their head. Nor was it ever reproduced in maps emanating from Spanish chart-makers. On the extremity of a large peninsula of the north-east coast, we read, "Prima tierra vista," that is, "the first land seen,"—or the alleged landfall of Cabot.

The locality was doubtless intended to represent Cape Breton. Then, in a gulf adjoining, which is meant for the Gulf of St. Lawrence, there is a very large island, named "*I. de S. Juan.*" This unexpected insular configuration is explained in legend 8 of Grajales, which I have already cited.

In reality, there is no such island anywhere near the north coast of Cape Breton, unless it be Newfoundland. In those days, however, and for many years after 1497, Newfoundland was believed to form part of the mainland. The falsity of the statement can be easily accounted for :

Sebastian Cabot's entire configuration of that locality and most of the legends and names inscribed in it have been boldly plagiarized from the Dieppe map drawn by the French cartographer, Nicolas Desliens, in 1541. This map, which is now in the Dresden Royal Library, is based upon the discoveries of Jacques Cartier.¹

Further, in this plagiarism of Sebastian Cabot's his delineation of the pretended "Isla de S. Juan" does not even represent an existing island. What he has thus depicted, and claims to have discovered and named, is, in reality, only a cartographical distortion,—an amalgam of islets, sunken rocks, shoals, and sandbars, known as "The Magdalens." These, some French cartographer (probably Desliens himself) had conglomerated by mistake, ascribing to them the shape of a compact island of considerable dimensions; and Cabot actually reproduces it with no other authority than the erroneous map itself.

In this way was John Cabot's discovery located in 1544 at such a great distance from the latitude where it had figured in all the Spanish maps made while Sebastian held the office of Pilot-

¹ See the facsimiles in "John Cabot, the Discoverer of North America." London: B. F. Stevens, 1896, pp. 94-95.

Major, and according to models necessarily constructed from data furnished by him.

It lies with the believers in the authenticity of the landfall at Cape Breton to account for this sudden and unexpected change, and to explain why, after constantly inscribing the discovery in Labrador, Sebastian Cabot came at such a late hour to place it at least 10 degrees farther south. His admirers have hitherto neglected to answer this all-important question seriously, and with an adequate knowledge of the subject. They allege that as the Spanish government was very jealous of imparting to foreigners any information concerning its colonial enterprises and discoveries, chart-makers were prohibited—even under penalty of death!—from marking on maps any geographical data of the kind. This theory I myself believed in to a degree when I commenced studying American cartography thirty-four years ago, and even subsequently. It is, nevertheless, erroneous in every respect.

In the first place, there is no evidence whatever that, notwithstanding the rights conveyed by the Bull of Demarcation, Spain ever laid claim to the north-east coast of America. The inference is rather the other way. The famous map of Juan de la Cosa, Columbus's own pilot,

and Chief Cartographer of Spain, not only sets forth that the north-eastern borders of America were discovered by the English, but acknowledges tacitly the supremacy of England over the region, by dotting it entirely with British flags.

True it is that, in 1511, one Juan de Agramonte obtained from Queen Juana leave to go with two vessels "to ascertain the secret of the new land," that is, the strait which was supposed to lead to Cathay through the Baccalaos ; but it was "on condition that two of his pilots should be Bretons brought direct from Brittany." This shows that Spain was not yet then in possession of the geographical knowledge requisite for such an enterprise.

The Spaniards in fact never sailed north of the Carolinas until 1524, when Estevan Gomez went in search of the western passage. Nor do we find them visiting that coast again until 1541, when Ares de Sea was commissioned by Charles V. to see "what Jacques Cartier had discovered in the country called Canada." Further, we have the positive statement of Oviedo, then State Chronicler for the Indies, that his countrymen and himself had no knowledge of the Northern regions ; and that was

the reason why the model map of Chavès did not extend beyond $21^{\circ} 15'$. Spain, therefore, had nothing to conceal regarding the geography of the north-east coast of America.

In the second place, there is not a shadow of evidence that Spain ever concealed her transatlantic discoveries, or prohibited cartographical information concerning them. Thus do we see Christopher Columbus himself, who, more than anyone else, was interested in preventing transgressions of his privileges and of the rights of the Crown, order, without any hesitation, for the use even of a Venetian admiral, "a map of the newly discovered lands, detailed and complete." When Magellan had accomplished his famous discovery of the straits that bear his name, which one might suppose Spain would have reserved exclusively to herself, it was at once graphically described in all maps and globes, with the exact route. And what is more, the information was conveyed openly to the Archbishop of Salzburg, by Maximilianus Transylvanus, the secretary of Charles V. Several other instances of the kind could be cited.

It stands to reason that it would have been impossible to keep such information secret. Did not the numerous ships equipped in Seville, in

Cadiz, and in Palos for the New World carry charts? And was it not indispensable that such maps should be as exact and complete as possible? Look at the relatively numerous specimens of Sevillian hydrography which have come down to us. Do they not set forth all and singular the geographical knowledge of the New World which the Spanish pilots and cosmographers possessed in the first half of the sixteenth century? When once in the hands of the four hundred pilots and masters who at one time were in the employ of Castile, exclusively for the American trade, how could they escape the curiosity of the numerous merchants and adventurers who flocked into the southern ports, waiting for a favourable opportunity to cross the ocean and explore new countries?

My opponents reply by quoting the following passage from the above-mentioned letter sent in 1527 from Seville, by Robert Thorne, with a map, to Dr. Lee: "That it [the map] is not to be showed or communicated there [in England] with many of that court. For though there is nothing in it prejudiciall to the emperor, yet it may be a cause of paine to the maker, as well for that none may make these cards but certayne

appointed and allowed masters." What does this prove? Only that Thorne's map had not been indorsed by the competent authorities, as the law required.¹ But this obligation was not intended to withhold geographical information. The government acted in the interest of the fisc, and more particularly of navigation, which suffered greatly from a competition created by incompetent cartographers.² And we have only to cast a glance at Thorne's map in Hakluyt to see that it is scarcely possible to imagine a poorer specimen of cartographical handiwork. The words in Thorne's letter, "though there is nothing in it [the map] prejudicial to the emperor," the reference to the pilots, who alone are authorized to make maps, and the fact that its configurations are identical with those in all the charts of the time, without any addition whatever, show conclusively that the proviso accompanying the transmission of the map to Dr. Lee was not prompted by the motives which certain critics allege.

Again, if the Spanish government had any particular reasons for making a secret of the geography of the Baccalaos region, how is it

¹ "Discovery," pp. 257-259; "John Cabot," pp. 74-75.

² See the "Colloquio" written by Fernando Columbus.

that Sebastian Cabot, who was Pilot-Major of Spain, inscribes so fully—and as exactly as he could—in a map intended to be engraved, the configurations of Cape Breton, Newfoundland, and Labrador, and this chiefly in the interest of a rival nation? Moreover the history of Spanish jurisprudence in the sixteenth century leaves no room to doubt that had it been so great a crime to mark maritime discoveries in maps, we should find some ordinance or law on the subject. There are no traces of anything of the kind in the numerous *Recopilaciones de Leyes* published in Spain.

I venture to suggest another explanation. It is, I think, now admitted by all who have read the authentic documents published in my latest work¹ on the subject, that Sebastian Cabot was an unmitigated charlatan, who frequently disguised the truth, and was constantly engaged in plotting and corresponding in secret with foreign rulers, all whom he betrayed in turn. He had tried several times to ingratiate himself with the English king. In 1538, he intrigued to influence Sir Thomas Wyatt, resident ambassador at the court of Spain, to recommend his services to

¹ "John and Sebastian Cabot." London: B. F. Stevens, and New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1896.

Henry VIII., which in fact was done by Sir Philip Hoby when he returned to London. But the manœuvre succeeded only several years later.

At that time, a great change had taken place in the relative importance of the northern coast of the new continent. The seas which bordered the Baccalaos region were no longer a mere common fishing-ground frequented by the smacks of Portugal, Biscay, Normandy, and England. The successful explorations of Jacques Cartier had been followed by the planting of French colonies. The part selected was not Labrador, on which, in all the maps of the period, was inscribed the uninviting legend, "*No ay en ella cosa de provecho*" ("Here there is nothing of utility"). On the contrary, the French had chosen the country around the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Cape Breton, which the reports of Cartier and Roberval to Francis I. represented to be a beautiful and fertile country, with rich copper-mines, fine ports, and the most navigable rivers in the world.

Under the circumstances, the cartographical statement of Sebastian Cabot, as embodied in the planisphere of 1544, may well have been a suggestion of British claims, and a bid

for the favour of the King of England. To place near the entrance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence the landfall of 1497, was tantamount to declaring that region to be English dominion, as the discovery had been accomplished by a vessel sailing under the British flag—"sub banneris vexillis et insigniis nostris," said Henry VII.

Nor was the hint conveyed by Sebastian at an unseasonable time; England being then at war with France, and continuing so until 1547. At all events, it is certain that, to use the language of Hakluyt, "the title which England has to that part of America which is from Florida sixty-seven degrees northward" is or was derived "from the letters granted to John Cabot and his three sons."

Convinced that the location of the landfall at Cape Breton is an after-thought of Sebastian Cabot, and devoid of all authenticity, there is nothing left but to examine the data furnished in 1497 by John Cabot himself. These are contained in the first dispatch of Soncino, which I translate :

"After sailing from Bristol . . the ship passed Ireland more to the west; then sailed toward the north, and afterward east [Error for "west"],

when, after a few days, the North Star was to the right."¹

This is all we possess, in the nature of positive data, to determine where, in 1497, John Cabot effected his landfall. Technically speaking, the only conclusion which geographers could infer from such scanty details was that the landfall had to be sought north of $51^{\circ} 15'$ N. lat., being that of the southern extremity of Ireland. Ireland, however, extends to $55^{\circ} 15'$ N. lat. From what point between these two parallels did John Cabot sail westward? Supposing that it was Valencia, and that the route continued due west, he would have sighted Belle Isle or its vicinity. But Cabot said positively that he altered his course when to the west of Ireland and stood to the northward. From what latitude exactly, and where he again put his ship on the western tack, are questions which no one can answer beyond stating that it was north of $51^{\circ} 15'$. I have surmised and said that, according to Soncino's statement, and taking into account the extremely northern latitudes in which all

¹ "Partitosi da Bristo . . . Passato Ibernia più occidentale, e poi alzatosi verso el septentrione, cominciò ad navigare ale parte orientale, lassandosi—fra qualche giorni—la tramontana ad mano drita."

the Spanish maps located the British discoveries in the New World, the landfall must have been in Labrador, west of Belle Isle, somewhere about Sandwich Bay or Invuctoke¹ or about 53° 30' N. lat. But this estimate I bring forward only as a supposition.

Dr. S. E. Dawson, in an able and interesting paper published in the twelfth volume of the "Transactions" of the Royal Society of Canada has opposed this conclusion ; and his arguments deserve to be attentively examined.

A remarkable circumstance related in John Cabot's verbal account of his first transatlantic voyage, was the extraordinary number of cod-fish which he saw in the sea laving the newly discovered regions.

I referred to Cape Chudley as a locality where cod were more plentiful than anywhere else. My opponent shows that now cod arrive there only after August 15, at which date Cabot was already back in England, and, that, consequently, Cape Chudley cannot have been his landfall. But I have never said that Cape Chudley was John Cabot's landfall. I only advanced the supposition that this cape may have been the

¹ See Plate I. in the "Discovery of America," and in "John Cabot, the Discoverer of North America," p. 111.

terminus of Cabot's exploration of the three hundred marine leagues (or miles) westward. The most therefore that can be made out of the argument is that Cabot found no cod at Cape Chudley when he reached the place.

Nor can it be inferred from the absence of cod in Southern Labrador before the twentieth of June that Cabot's landfall must be located where the fish is already to be found at that date; *i.e.*, Newfoundland, or Nova Scotia. Cabot does not say when and where exactly "that sea is covered with fishes." He may have observed the fact only *when returning* from Cape Chudley, homeward bound. Now if, according to my hypothesis, he effected his return from Labrador to Bristol in about thirty-four days, arriving in the latter port on August 5, he might well have noticed the amazing number of codfish in Southern Labrador, or on the coast of Newfoundland, between June 20 and the first week in July, and have continued to see it for a long distance.

A more important question mooted by Dr. Dawson—and in the true scientific spirit, but with singularly erroneous conclusions—is that of the deviation of the magnetic needle.

The patriotic critic, avowedly availing himself

of the data furnished by Mr. Charles A. Scott in his valuable paper on the variation of the compass off the Bahama Islands at the time of the landfall of Columbus in 1492, has formed the following opinion :—

“ If Columbus on a direct western course dropped two hundred and forty miles from Gomara, his point of departure to his landfall in the Antilles, in 1492, with a variation of one point west, it is altogether probable that John Cabot, with a variation of a point and a half, would have dropped, in 1497, three hundred and sixty miles to the south on his western course across the Atlantic ; and, again, if John Cabot laid his course to the west by compass from latitude 53° north, the variation, so much greater than that observed by Columbus, would have carried him clear of Cape Race, and to the next probable landfall, Cape Breton.”—*Trans. Royal Society of Canada*, Sect. xi., 1894, p. 58.

Such are the principal reasons alleged against the probability of the landing of Cabot on the coast of Labrador, and in favour of the opinion that it was in the vicinity of Cape Breton. The argument so far from being decisive is, on the contrary, entirely hypothetical, problematic, and erroneous in every respect.

The laws of the secular motion of the curves of equal variation on the surface of the globe are yet too little known to enable anyone to infer, from the variations which Columbus experienced in or about 25° N. lat., the variations which Cabot experienced in 53° N. lat. There is nothing whatever to show that the variations experienced by Cabot were not inferior to one point and a half west, or that they were not *nil*, or even eastwardly. Again: If the variations experienced by Columbus can be determined more or less approximately by inferences drawn from his own journal, we possess no such information concerning the route followed by Cabot. There is no ground, therefore, to say that if the variation experienced by Columbus was one point west, the variation experienced by Cabot must have been one point and a half; nor can such consequence be inferred from any known fact.

It is not exact to infer that if with a variation of one point Columbus dropped two hundred and forty miles in a course of about 3,150 miles, Cabot dropped proportionately in a course of about 1,600 miles, that is, three hundred and sixty miles for a variation of a point and a half. In the first place, such deviations are to each

other as the tangents of the angles of variation, and not as the variations themselves. This, however, is inconsiderable in the present case, because the angles are small; although in nautical calculations every item tells. But Dr. Dawson commits an egregious mistake when he reasons as if Cabot's course and Columbus's course had actually been *of equal length*. Now, the course of Columbus was, we admit, about 3,150 miles, whilst Cabot's was, as we have just said, about 1,600 *miles only*.

If with a variation of one point west on a direct western course of about 3,150 miles, Columbus dropped 240 miles, Cabot, in a course of about 1,600 miles, with an alleged variation of a point and a half, certainly did not drop "360 miles." Far from it! Any mathematician might have told Dr. Dawson that Cabot then would have dropped *only 179 miles*.¹ This

¹ In a course of 1,600 miles, an angular deviation of $16^{\circ} 52'$ in Cabot's route would, at the landfall, correspond with a deviation equal to $\tan 16^{\circ} 52' \times 1,600 = 179$ miles. The deviation of Columbus must be reduced from one point ($11^{\circ} 15'$) to $4^{\circ} 15'$; to obtain 240 miles of linear deviation, in a course of about 3,150 miles; Cabot's deviation will have to be similarly reduced from one point and a half ($16^{\circ} 52' 30''$) to $6^{\circ} 22'$, which gives 179 miles of linear deviation.

Other errors quite as important could be pointed out.

enormous difference of about one half demolishes the vaunted theory of my learned opponent from top to bottom. And Cabot, instead of making his landfall at the northern extremity of Cape Breton Island, as Dr. Dawson alleges, would have made it 181 *miles more to the northwards*; that is to say, in Newfoundland, on the eastern shore of Cape Bauld, at the entrance of White Bay, about 90 miles south of Cape Bauld.

Nor is it logical to take into account only the differences in the variations of the compass. The route of Columbus was entirely in latitudes where fine weather and a smooth sea prevailed. It was besides in the region of north-east trade-winds. The navigator has not then to contend against the errors of reckoning due to beating against head-winds and to changes of course and speed in bad weather. The currents, as well as the winds, were favourable to Columbus. Finally, if he did experience a variation of one

For instance, taking as a basis Dr. Dawson's own data—for Cabot in a course laid to the W. by compass from lat. 53° N., and near the Irish coast, to be "carried clear of Cape Race and to Cape Breton"—the variation experienced cannot have been a magnetic variation of "a point and a half" ($16^{\circ} 52'$), but a variation of more than two points and a half (29 degrees!). Here, again, what becomes of Dr. Dawson's initial theory?

point westward, it was only in the meridian of 40° W. East of that meridian the variations were much less, and possibly in a contrary direction, as he probably cut the line of no variation between 28° and 32° W. long.¹ There was therefore, as regards the variation, a partial compensation.

If we now examine the regions necessarily traversed by Cabot, we find that he did not enjoy such advantages. He sailed constantly in the region of the brave west winds, that is, with head-winds which compelled him to tack nearly the whole time. This tacking had to be carried out in latitudes where gales and heavy seas are almost constant. The consequence of these difficulties is made apparent in the expression of Soncino, that Cabot was compelled "to wander a good deal." In such a case it is impossible to ascertain the error, or deviation between the course actually made by the navigator and that which he believed himself to have made.

Under these circumstances, it is bold to assume, as Dr. Dawson does, that Cabot's course was "west magnetic," and that the corresponding true course was this magnetic course west, cor-

¹ Schott, "Method and Results," chart and p. 7.

rected exactly by $1\frac{1}{2}$ points of variation north-westerly. Yet, my opponent's belief that the landfall actually was at Cape Breton rests mainly upon this supposition.

Well may we say, therefore, that with our present sources of information no one is warranted in asserting that John Cabot discovered the continent of North America on June 24, 1497, and that his landfall was Cape Breton.

MATHEMATICAL DEMONSTRATION OF THE FALLACY.

I.

DR. DAWSON alleges that "if Columbus on a direct western course dropped 240 miles from Gomara, with a variation of one point west, it is altogether probable that John Cabot, with a variation of a point and a half, would have dropped 360 miles to the south on his western course across the Atlantic."

Yes, it is probable that then Cabot would have dropped *about* 360 miles, *provided his course had been precisely of the same length as the course of Columbus.*

Unfortunately for Dr. Dawson's theory, the course of Columbus was about 3,150 miles, whilst Cabot's was (in round figures) 1,600 miles only.

If Columbus, in a course of 3,150 miles, with a variation of one point ($11^{\circ} 15'$), experienced a deviation of 240 miles, as Dr. Dawson says, this linear deviation corresponds with an angular deviation expressed as follows :

$$\begin{aligned} \tan x &= \frac{240}{3,150} \\ (\text{Log } 240 &= 2,380211 \\ \text{Co-log } 3,150 &= \overline{4,501689} \\ \text{Log } \tan x &= \overline{2,881900} \\ x &= 4^\circ 15'. \end{aligned}$$

The angular deviation experienced by Columbus was therefore reduced from one point ($11^\circ 15'$) (magnetic variation) to $4^\circ 15'$, which is the true angular deviation in the course.

Now (supposing all other data or circumstances to be deemed equal) if, as Dr. Dawson again says, Cabot experienced a magnetic variation of one point and a half ($16^\circ 52' 30''$), this variation (considered as the angular deviation in the course) must be reduced in the same proportion to obtain the true angular deviation in the course; that is, instead of one point and a half, it will be the angular deviation set forth in the following proportion :

$$\frac{11^\circ 15'}{4^\circ 15'} = \frac{16^\circ 52' 30''}{x}$$

$$x = \frac{4^\circ 15' \times 16^\circ 52' 30''}{11^\circ 15'} = 6^\circ 22' 30''.$$

This angular deviation of $6^\circ 22' 30''$ corre-

sponds with the linear deviation $\tan 6^\circ 22' 30'' \times 1,600 =$ about 179 miles.

$$(\text{Log } \tan 6^\circ 22' 30'' = \bar{1},048155$$

$$\text{Log } 1,600 = \underline{3,204120}$$

$$\text{Log linear deviation in the course} = \underline{2,252275}$$

deviation = 178 miles, 7.)

II.

DR. DAWSON also alleges that if Cabot laid his course to the west by compass from latitude 53° north, a variation of one point and a half "would have carried him clear of Cape Race, and to the next probable landfall, Cape Breton." In the first place, as Dr. Dawson is unable to give the longitude of the starting point in 53° north latitude, he is not authorized to affirm that a variation of one point and a half, taken as the angular deviation in the course, would have "carried him clear of Cape Race." Besides, starting, for instance, from 53° north latitude and 11° west longitude of Greenwich, to double Cape Race at a short distance, implies an angular deviation of 11° southwards.

But, just as we have seen that the deviation experienced by Columbus in a course of 3,150

miles was only 240 miles, corresponding with an angular variation of $4^{\circ} 15'$, although the magnetic variation was supposed to have been $11^{\circ} 15'$, and that the course of Cabot with an alleged magnetic variation of one point and a half ($16^{\circ} 52'$) had to experience proportionally an angular deviation of $6^{\circ} 22'$ only, according to the proportion :

$$\frac{4^{\circ} 15'}{11^{\circ} 15'} = \frac{6^{\circ} 22'}{16^{\circ} 52'}$$

So, for Cabot's course, which experienced an angular deviation of 11° necessary to pass in the vicinity of Cape Race, the magnetic variation, which we call x , will have to be in conformity with the equality of the relations :

$$\frac{11^{\circ}}{x} = \frac{4^{\circ} 15'}{11^{\circ} 15'} = \frac{6^{\circ} 22'}{16^{\circ} 52'}$$

That is, the magnetic variation which Cabot must have experienced in order to double Cape Race is equal to

$$\frac{11^{\circ} \times 11^{\circ} 15'}{4^{\circ} 15'} = 29^{\circ} \text{ West.}$$

Consequently, if Cabot actually doubled Cape Race, he did not experience a magnetic variation of one point and a half only, as Dr. Dawson says, but a variation of *over two points and a half*, viz., of 29 degrees!

POST SCRIPTUM.

This mathematical demonstration, and the reasons given on pages 29-31, apply with as much force to Sir Clements Markham's theory of Cabot's landfall at Bonavista Bay, as set forth in the paper read at the Royal Geographical Society, April 12th, 1897 ("Geographical Journal" for June, 1897, page 608).

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APPENDIX.

THE SHIP'S NAME THE "MATTHEW" A FORGERY OF CHATTERTON?¹

THE occasion of the fourth centenary of the discovery of North America by John Cabot, under the British flag, may lend interest to the following remarks :

Barrett's "History of Bristol" (Bristol, 1789, 4to, p. 172) contains this statement :

"In the year 1497, the 24th of June, on St. John's day, was Newfoundland found by Bristol men, in a ship called the *Matthew* ;—as it is in a manuscript in my possession."

With one or two exceptions, all the historians of Cabot have placed implicit confidence in that assertion, and henceforth the ship's name, the "Matthew," hitherto absolutely unknown, and which stands uncorroborated, became as famous as that of the "Mayflower."

¹ Reprinted from "Notes and Queries."

Endeavours were made to discover Barrett's manuscript, inasmuch as alleged old Bristolian documents are not always to be trusted, particularly those quoted by Barrett, owing to his constant personal dealings with Chatterton ("Notes and Queries," Vol. V., Feb. 20th, 1858, p. 154, and "Dictionary of National Biography," Vol. III., 1885, pp. 285, 286). But the searchers have failed thus far to find it.

In Mr. G. E. Weare's "Cabot's Discovery of North America," just published (London, 8vo, pp. 115-122) there is an account of a MS. Chronicle, formerly in the possession of the Fust family of Hill Court, Gloucestershire, which MS. was certainly akin to Barrett's.

The earliest mention of the existence of that MS. in the Fust family is relatively recent. It dates only from the death of Sir John Dutton Colt, who had inherited the MS. from a niece of Sir John Fust, who died in 1779. After Sir John Dutton's death, in 1845, it passed to Sir E. H. Vaughan Colt, who sold it to Mr. William Strong, a Bristol bookseller. Mr. Strong requested his assistant "to collate the entries therein with Barrett's and Seyer's Histories, with a view to the extraction from the Chronicle of all the entries which were yet unpublished, or

which contained information supplemental to any matter or event already published in either of those histories." Mr. Strong subsequently sold the MS. Chronicle, together with the *excerpta*, to Mr. John Hugh Smyth-Pigott.

In the year 1849 a sale was held of Mr. Smyth-Pigott's collection. The catalogue mentions the MS. as being "from Sir Francis Fust's library." In that case it would be traced back to 1769, which is the date of Sir Francis's death. The MS. was bought in by Mr. Pigott, after whose decease it was again sold, in 1853, and purchased by Mr. Kerlake, a Bristol bookseller, for £11 5s. Finally, it was burnt to ashes in the conflagration of his store, February 14th, 1860. But the *excerpta* or "collations" made by Mr. Strong's assistant escaped, and they are now in the possession of Mr. William George, a Bristollian bookseller. I borrow all these details from Mr. Weare's book.

It is one of those *excerpta* which this writer has inserted in his work ; but he omitted to state that it was already published twenty years ago (in Vol. IV., p. 350, of the "Encyclopædia Britannica") and from the same extracts. The complete text is as follows :

“ [COPY ENTRY.]

“ 1496. John Drewes [Mayor]. Thomas Vaughan, Hugh Johnes [Sheriff]. John Elyott [Bailiffs].

“ This year, on St. John the Baptist's Day, the land of America was found by the Merchants of Bristow in a shippe of Bristowe, called the *Mathew*; the which said ship departed from the port of Bristowe, the second day of May, and came home again the 6th of August next following.

“ 1497. Henry Dale [Mayor]. John Spencer, Richard Vaughan [Sheriffs?] William Lane [Bailiffs].”

The reader will notice that the above citation is presented in the form of and as if it were a literal copy of an official document originally written in 1497. The old time civic entries of years dating, we are informed by Mr. Weare, from the 29th of September and ending on the 28th of September. Now, the name of “ America,” which is conspicuous in that extract, was not invented until ten years afterwards, in April, 1507, at St. Diey, in Lorraine, by a German geographer, called Martin Waltzemüller or Hylacomylus,¹ in these words :

“ Nunc vero et hæ partes sunt latius lustratæ et alia

¹ “ Cosmographiæ introductio ” . . . Urbs Deodate . . . Finit. vij Kalend. Majj Anno supra sesqui Millesium vij. (“ Bibliotheca Americana Vetustissima,” p. 94.)

quarta pars per Americum Vesputium (ut in sequentibus audietur inventa est quam non video cur quis jure vetet ab Americo inventore sagacis ingenii viro Amerigen, quasi Americi terram sive Americam dicendam, cum et Europa et Asia a mulieribus sua sortita sint nomina :—But now that those parts have been more extensively examined and another fourth part has been discovered by Americus (as will be seen in the sequel), I do not see why any one may justly forbid it to be named *Amerige*,¹ that is, Americ's Land, from Americus the discoverer, a man of sagacious mind, or *America*, since both Europe and Asia chanced to receive their names from women." (*Cosmographiae introductio* . . . Urbs Deodate . . . Finit. vij. Kalend. Maij Anno supra sesqui Millesium. vij.)

But this fact remained unknown until Humboldt disclosed it in his "Examen Critique," published at Paris in 1834.

The extract from the Fust MS. gives also the alleged date of the discovery, viz., "On St. John the Baptist's day [June 24th]." This day was set forth for the first time only in 1544, by one Dr. Grajalès, of the Port of Santa Maria, in Spain, when preparing the inscriptions of Sebastian Cabot's map, which was first published in that year. As to the date of "June 24th," it is highly improbable (*supra*, pp. 7-8).

¹ Edward G. Bourne, in "The Nation," Oct. 6, 1892.

So much for the common belief that the above mentioned *excerptum* is contemporaneous with Cabot's first voyage.

The Fust Chronicle, purporting to have been written by one "Maurice Toby, Gentleman,"—otherwise totally unknown—bore the following title:

"A Brief Chronicle, conteyninge the accompte of the Reignes of all the Kings in the Realme of Englande, from the entering of Brutus untill this present yeere, with all the notable acts done by the dyvers of them, and wherein is also conteyned the names of all the Mayors, Stewardes, Bayliffes, and Sheriffes, of the laudable town of Bristowe, now at this time called ye Worshippfull City of Bristowe, with all the notable acts done in those days, from the first yeere of King Henry y^e 3rd, A.D. 1217, untill the present yeere, 1565."

If the Chronicle was not written until 1565, of course there is no anachronism either in the use of the name "America," or in the date of June 24th, 1497. But in that case, we must assume that they are interpolations, or that the extract was not intended to be given as an original text. This alternative is difficult to believe, on account of the technical form of the *excerptum*, of the specific reference to "this

year," and of the names of mayors, sheriffs, and bailiffs therein inserted.

We must at present examine the question of authenticity from another point of view.

The extract states that the discovery of "the land of America" was made "on St. John the Baptist's day." Although the statement was inserted in a map of 1544, its earliest mention in a book is not earlier than 1589, when Hakluyt published a translation of the cartographical inscription in the first edition of his "Principall Navigations." It is evident that "Maurice Toby, Gentleman,"—whom I strongly suspect to be of the same family as the monk Rawley—cannot have transcribed in 1565 a phrase which was written at the soonest in 1584 (Hakluyt's "Discourse on Western Planting") and published only five years afterwards. But some will answer that he may have borrowed it from the engraved map itself, an edition of which was made in England, by Clement Adams, in 1549, or even from the little guide book which accompanied the edition of 1544.

The Fust extract gives also a date for the sailing out of Cabot's expedition: "the ship *departed from the port of Bristow* the second day of May." This cannot have been copied from the map;

but it is partly stated in Hakluyt, three pages after the passage where he sets forth the date of the discovery, viz., "and *departed from Bristowe* in the beginning of May." This coincidence, almost in the same terms, although incomplete, is worthy of notice. There remains, however, the date of the return, also given in the *excerptum*, viz., "6th of August next following." Where did the author of the Chronicle find it? We know that Cabot was back in England on August 10th, 1497, but we know it only from the gratuity which Henry VII. granted him on that day, and this was made known in print not before 1831, when N. Harris Nicolas published his "Excerpta Historica."

A critical examination of all the Fust *excerpta* alone could perhaps afford at the present time the means of proving absolutely the apocryphal character of that Chronicle. Meanwhile, my impression is that both MSS. were fabricated, in some form or other, by Chatterton, who sold one to Sir Francis Fust, a zealous book collector, and we know to what extent this predilection often blinds the discernment of bibliophiles,—and the other to Barrett "whom nothing could startle into incredulity." In connection with this, it is well to recollect that Chatterton died in 1770,

Sir Francis Fust in 1769, and that although Barrett's book was not published before 1789, he began from an early period to collect materials for the enterprize, and that his portrait, engraved in 1764, already designates him as 'Author of the History and Antiquities of Bristol,' says Mr. Charles Kent. My supposition is further strengthened by the following remark of Mr. George Price, the learned city librarian of Bristol, in 1858: "I have for a long time regarded these writings [viz., documents of which the local historians have made ample use] as exceedingly mischievous, so far at least as they refer to Bristol, and deserving to be classed with the forgeries of Chatterton, who, in fact, I have no doubt was the author of many of them."

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

JOHN CABOT, THE DISCOVERER OF NORTH AMERICA,
AND SEBASTIAN HIS SON. A Chapter of the
Maritime History of England under the Tudors.
1496-1557. London: B. F. Stevens, Publisher.
1896. 1 vol., demy 8vo, with 10 Maps.

In the Press.

TO APPEAR IN NOVEMBER NEXT,
B. F. STEVENS, PUBLISHER.

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DIPLOMATIC HISTORY OF AMERICA:
ITS FIRST CHAPTER.

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1 vol., post 8vo, with a map.

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